Fact sheet

Destinations of school leavers from major city, regional and remote areas of NSW

2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

This fact sheet provides a high-level overview of findings from the 2023 NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey. Results are presented for Year 12 completers and early school leavers based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness of their last known school.

Survey sample

In 2023, 64,487 Year 12 completers and 26,263 early school leavers from across NSW were invited to take part in the survey. Of these, it was estimated that 69,326 school leavers were from schools in major city areas, 17,572 from schools in inner regional areas, and 3,851 from schools in outer regional, remote or very remote areas of NSW. Of these:

- 23,259 Year 12 completers and 3,777 early school leavers from major city areas responded
- 4,619 Year 12 completers and 1,685 early school leavers from inner regional areas responded
- 953 Year 12 completers and 430 early school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas responded.

Refer to 'Defining remoteness' (page 11) for further information on the ASGS remoteness structure.

Main post-school destinations in 2023

Major city school leavers

It was estimated that in 2023, 91.5% of all recent school leavers, 93.7% of Year 12 completers and 84.6% of early school leavers who attended schools in major cities of NSW were in education, training or employment.
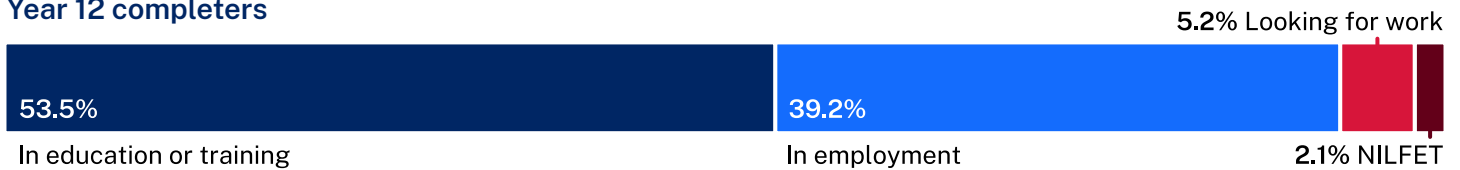
Year 12 completers

4.1% Looking for work

73.4%	20.3%	
In education or training	In employment	2.2% NILFET[1]

Early school leavers

4.5% NILFET

61.4%	23.2%	10.9%	
In education or training	In employment	Looking for work	

Inner regional school leavers

It was estimated that in 2023, 89.6% of all recent school leavers, 92.7% of Year 12 completers and 85.5% of early school leavers who attended schools in inner regional areas of NSW were in education, training or employment.
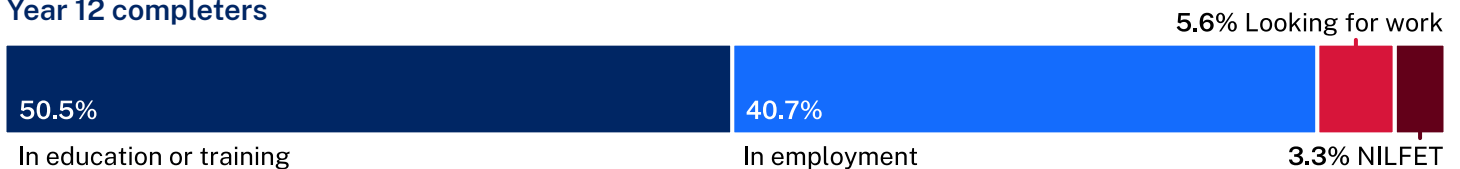
Year 12 completers

5.2% Looking for work

53.5%	39.2%	
In education or training	In employment	2.1% NILFET

Early school leavers

3.9% NILFET

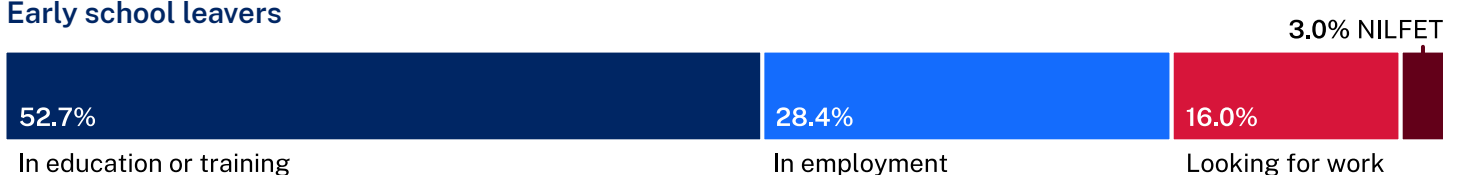| 57.5%	28.0%	10.6%	
In education or training	In employment	Looking for work	

Outer regional, remote and very remote school leavers

It was estimated that in 2023, 86.3% of all recent school leavers, 91.1% of Year 12 completers and 81.1% of early school leavers who attended schools in outer regional, remote or very remote areas of NSW were in education, training or employment.

Year 12 completers

5.6% Looking for work

50.5%	40.7%	
In education or training	In employment	3.3% NILFET

Early school leavers

3.0% NILFET

52.7%	28.4%	16.0%	
In education or training	In employment	Looking for work	

1   NILFET = not in the labour force, education or training

School leavers across NSW in education, training or employment

Undertaking a bachelor's degree or VET qualification

	Bachelor	VET cert IV+	VET cert III	VET cert I–II
Major cities	**44.2%** ▼ down 1.0 pp[2] since 2022	**5.0%** ▲ up 0.3 pp since 2022	**3.5%** ▲ up 1.0 pp since 2022	**1.3%** ▲ up 0.1 pp since 2022
Inner regional	**18.6%** ▼ down 1.5 pp since 2022	**3.5%** ▲ up 0.7 pp since 2022	**5.1%** ▲ up 1.1 pp since 2022	**1.7%** ▲ up 0.2 pp since 2022
Outer regional, remote or very remote	**15.6%** ▲ up 1.4 pp since 2022	**2.6%** ▼ down 0.1 pp since 2022	**4.6%** ▲ up 1.5 pp since 2022	**1.8%** ▲ up 0.3 pp since 2022

In an apprenticeship, traineeship, full-time work or part-time work

	Apprenticeship	Traineeship	Full-time work	Part-time work
Major cities	**12.0%** ~ no change since 2022	**4.5%** ▼ down 0.5 pp since 2022	**7.3%** ▼ down 1.0 pp since 2022	**13.7%** ~ no change since 2022
Inner regional	**18.4%** ▼ down 0.6 pp since 2022	**7.9%** ▼ down 1.1 pp since 2022	**15.0%** ▲ up 0.4 pp since 2022	**19.5%** ▲ up 0.6 pp since 2022
Outer regional, remote or very remote	**19.5%** ▼ down 1.7 pp since 2022	**7.4%** ▼ down 1.5 pp since 2022	**17.0%** ▲ up 0.2 pp since 2022	**17.7%** ▼ down 0.2 pp since 2022

Compared to school leavers from major city schools there was a:

- lower estimated proportion of school leavers from inner regional and outer regional / remote / very remote schools studying a bachelor's degree or VET certificate IV+
- higher estimated proportion of school leavers from inner regional and outer regional / remote / very remote schools studying VET certificate I–II, VET certificate III, apprenticeships or traineeships, engaged in full-time or part-time work or looking for work.

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2 pp = percentage points

Trends in destinations of school leavers from major city schools between 2014 and 2023:

- Bachelor's degree enrolments are trending downwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- VET certificate IV+ enrolments are trending downwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments are trending downwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships are trending upwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Traineeships are trending upwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- Full-time work is trending upwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- Part-time work is trending upwards by **0.5 pp** per year.
- Looking for work is trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.
- NILFET is trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.

Trends in destinations of school leavers from inner regional schools between 2014 and 2023:

- Bachelor's degree enrolments are trending downwards by **0.4 pp** per year.
- VET certificate IV+ enrolments are trending downwards by **0.5 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments are trending downwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships are trending upwards by **0.8 pp** per year.
- Traineeships are trending upwards by **0.2 pp** per year.
- Full-time work has increased by **0.4 pp** per year.
- Looking for work is trending downwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- NILFET is trending downwards by **0.1 pp** per year.

Trends in destinations of school leavers from outer regional / remote / very remote schools between 2014 and 2022:

- VET certificate IV+ enrolments are trending downwards by **0.5 pp** per year.
- VET certificate I–II enrolments are trending downwards by **0.3 pp** per year.
- Apprenticeships are trending upwards by **0.5 pp** per year.

In education or training

A consistently higher estimated proportion of Year 12 completers who attended schools in major cities were in education or training than early school leavers in major cities over time. The proportion of school leavers in education or training was similar for Year 12 completers and early school leavers for those who attended schools in areas outside major cities.

The estimated proportion of Year 12 completers who attended schools in major cities of NSW who were in education or training has decreased slightly from 2022 by 0.7 pp to 73.4%. For early school leavers this has increased by 2.1 pp to 61.4%. For those in inner regional areas of NSW, Year 12 completers in education and training decreased from 2022 by 2.0 pp to 53.5%. For early school leavers this remained stable. For those in outer regional, remote or very remote areas, Year 12 completers in education or training has decreased from 2022 by 1.4 pp to 50.5%. For early school leavers this has increased from 2022 by 1.6 pp to 52.7%.

Estimated proportion of school leavers in education or training, 2014 to 2023

Major cities

Year 12 completers: 77.0 (2014), 79.3 (2015), 74.4 (2016), 73.5 (2017), 72.7 (2018), 69.4 (2019), 65.5 (2020), 77.2 (2021), 74.1 (2022), 73.4 (2023)

Early school leavers: 57.3 (2014), 54.8 (2015), 55.6 (2016), 57.8 (2017), 59.4 (2018), 55.0 (2019), 52.9 (2020), 59.3 (2021), 59.2 (2022), 61.4 (2023)

Inner regional

Year 12 completers: 58.2 (2014), 60.8 (2015), 54.3 (2016), 54.7 (2017), 57.1 (2018), 52.9 (2019), 49.5 (2020), 57.6 (2021), 57.6 (2022), 57.5 (2023)

Early school leavers: 53.7 (2014), 52.2 (2015), 51.6 (2016), 52.8 (2017), 54.0 (2018), 51.3 (2019), 49.0 (2020), 56.8 (2021), 55.5 (2022), 53.5 (2023)

Outer regional, remote and very remote

Year 12 completers: 60.2 (2014), 58.2 (2015), 56.8 (2016), 55.3 (2017), 53.2 (2018), 51.6 (2019), 47.9 (2020), 53.0 (2021), 51.9 (2022), 52.7 (2023)

Early school leavers: 54.5 (2014), 50.8 (2015), 52.9 (2016), 44.5 (2017), 47.8 (2018), 48.8 (2019), 46.0 (2020), 51.9 (2021), 51.1 (2022), 50.5 (2023)

Legend: Early school leavers — Year 12 completers

Education trends

Year 12 completers

Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- **Health** enrolments have increased for major city and inner regional school leavers (**0.6 pp** per year).
- **Management and commerce** enrolments have decreased for major city (-**0.6 pp**) and inner regional school leavers (-**0.5 pp**).
- **Society and culture** enrolments have decreased for major city school leavers (-**0.5 pp**).

Early school leavers

Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- **Engineering** enrolments have increased for major city (average growth rate = **0.3 pp** per year) and inner regional school leavers (**0.5 pp**).
- **Management and commerce** enrolments have decreased for major city / inner regional (-**0.6 pp**) and outer regional / remote (-**1.1 pp**) school leavers.
- **Food, hospitality and personal services** enrolments have decreased for major city school leavers (-**0.5 pp**) and inner regional school leavers (-**1.0 pp**).

Most popular education enrolment areas

The top 5 areas of education for school leavers from major cities in 2023 have remained consistent since 2020, with little difference between the proportion of school leavers from major cities in the top 3 areas (society and culture = 16%, health = 16%, management and commerce = 15%). Engineering and related technologies was the fourth most popular between 2020 and 2023 and creative arts was the fifth most popular. Although the ranks may have fluctuated over time, the percentages have remained relatively stable.

Historical rankings for top 5 educational areas in 2023 – major cities

	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Society and culture – 18%	1	1	1	1	Society and culture – 16%
Management and commerce – 16%	2	2	2	2	Health – 16%
Health – 15%	3	3	3	3	Management and commerce – 15%
Engineering and related technologies – 12%	4	4	4	4	Engineering and related technologies – 14%
Creative arts – 10%	5	5	5	5	Creative arts – 9%
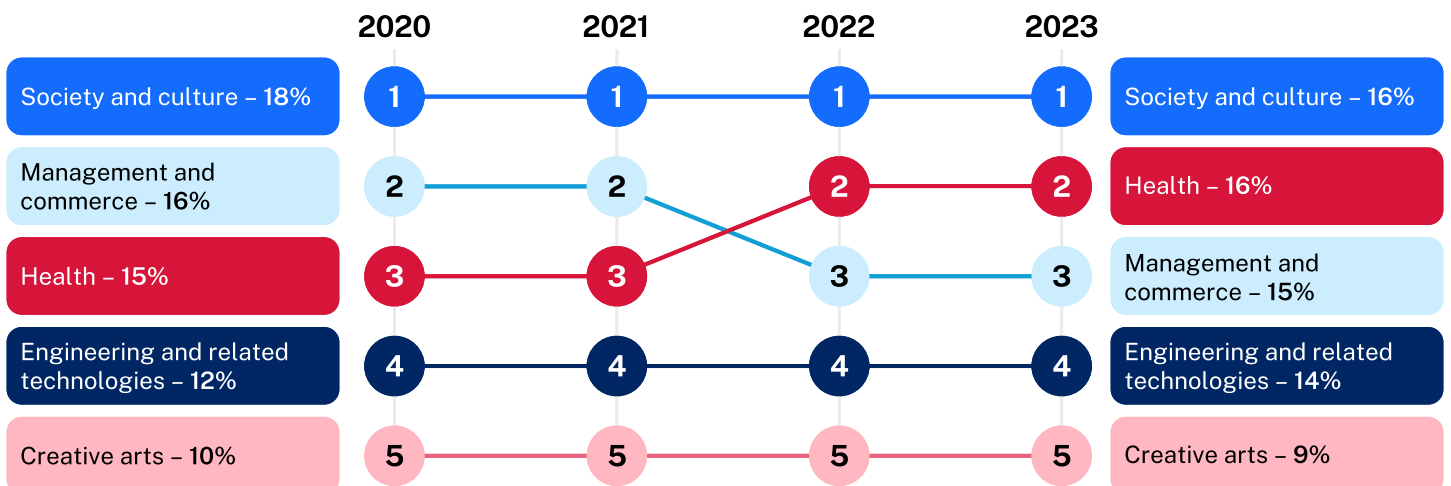
The top 5 areas of education for school leavers from inner regional areas in 2023 have remained consistent since 2020, with little difference between the proportion of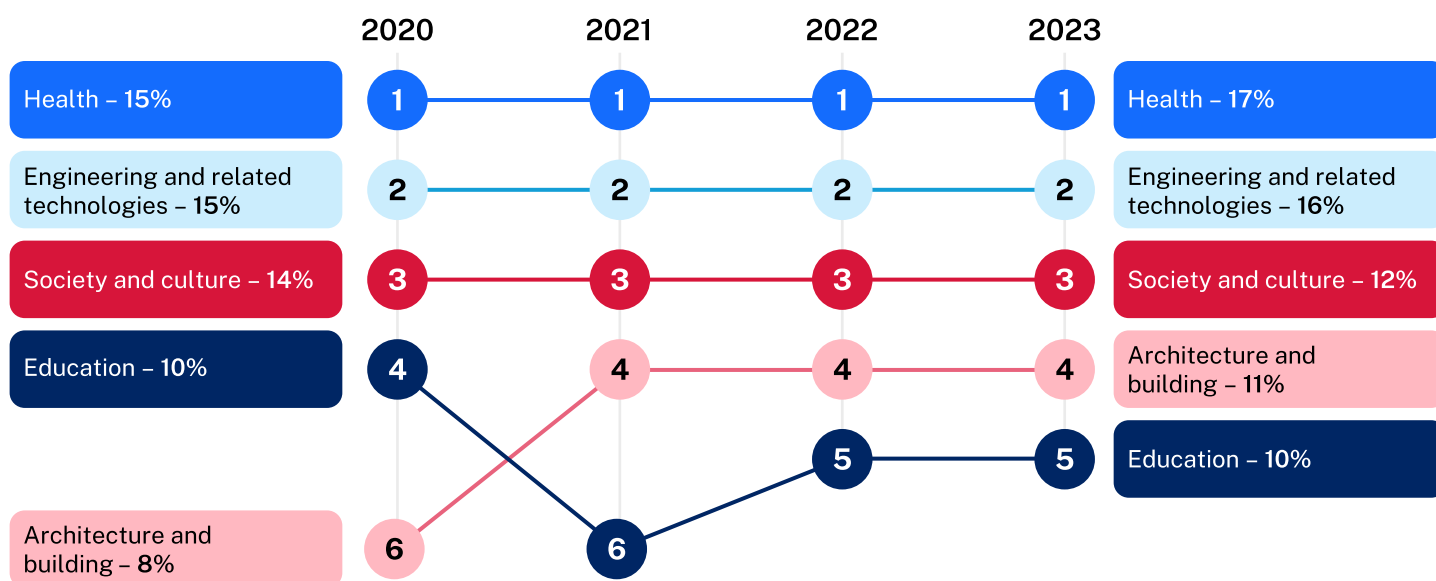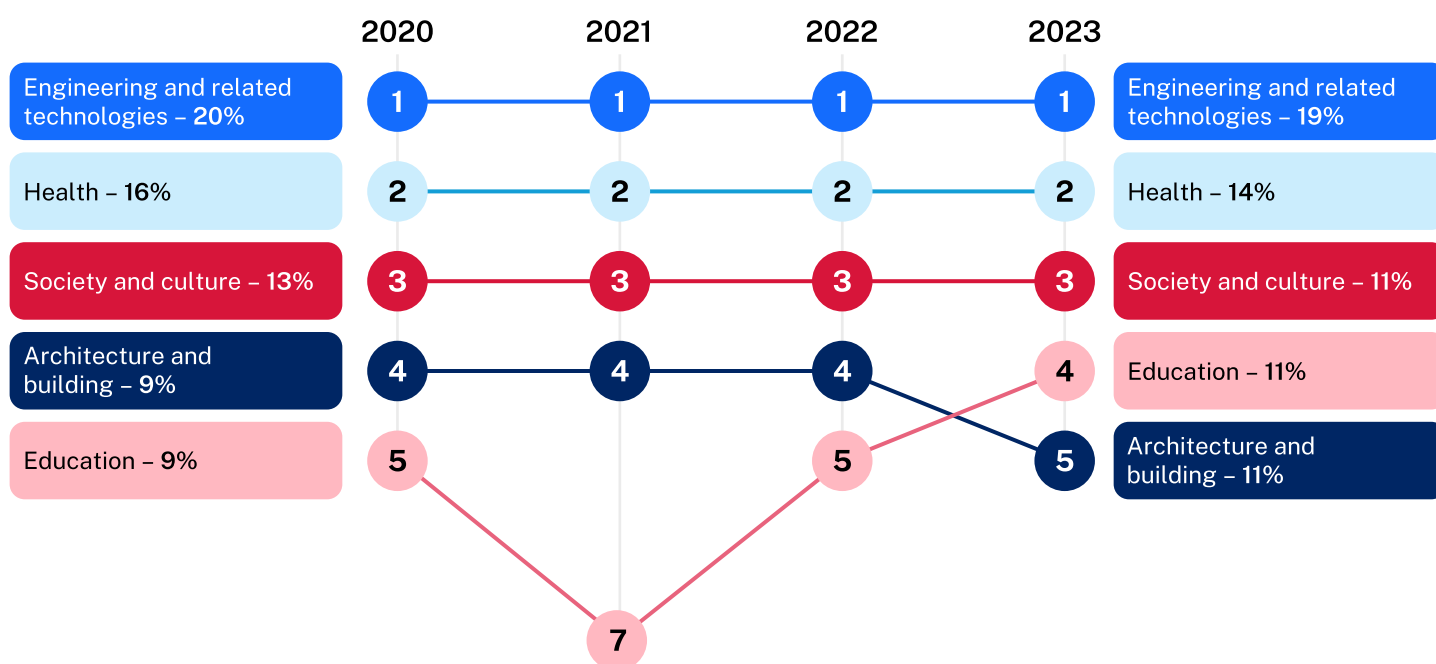 school leavers from inner regional areas in the third, fourth and fifth most popular areas (society and culture = 12%, architecture and building = 11%, education= 10%). Health was the most popular in 2023 and engineering and related technologies was the second most popular.

Historical rankings for top 5 educational areas in 2023 – inner regional

	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Health – 15%	1	1	1	1	Health – 17%
Engineering and related technologies – 15%	2	2	2	2	Engineering and related technologies – 16%
Society and culture – 14%	3	3	3	3	Society and culture – 12%
Education – 10%	4	4	4	4	Architecture and building – 11%
			5	5	Education – 10%
Architecture and building – 8%	6	6			

The top 5 areas of education for school leavers from outer regional, remote or very remote areas in 2023 have remained consistent since 2020. Between 2020 and 2023, 1 in 5 school leavers were enrolled in engineering subjects which was the top educational area. This was followed by health, society and culture, education, and architecture and building.

Historical rankings for top 5 educational areas in 2023 – outer regional, remote and very remote

|	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Engineering and related technologies – 20%	1	1	1	1	Engineering and related technologies – 19%
Health – 16%	2	2	2	2	Health – 14%
Society and culture – 13%	3	3	3	3	Society and culture – 11%
Architecture and building – 9%	4	4	4	4	Education – 11%
Education – 9%	5		5	5	Architecture and building – 11%
		7			

In employment

A consistently higher estimated proportion of Year 12 completers who attended schools in areas outside major cities were in employment than early school leavers outside major cities over time.[3] The proportion of school leavers in employment was similar for Year 12 completers and early school leavers for those who attended schools in major cities.

The estimated proportion of school leavers in employment has decreased for early school leavers who attended schools in all areas across NSW since 2022, and has increased for Year 12 completers outside major cities. The largest change was seen in major cities of NSW for early school leavers as a decrease of 3.4 pp to 23.2%, however Year 12 completers in major cities remained steady with a decrease of 0.2 pp to 20.3%. For early school leavers in inner regional areas, the estimated proportion of school leavers in employment decreased by 0.3 pp to 28.0%, while the proportion of Year 12 completers increased by 2.3 pp to 39.2%. For early school leavers in outer regional, remote and very remote areas, the estimated proportion of school leavers in employment decreased by 1.9 pp to 28.4%, while the proportion of Year 12 completers increased by 1.7 pp to 40.7%.

Estimated proportion of school leavers in employment, 2014 to 2023
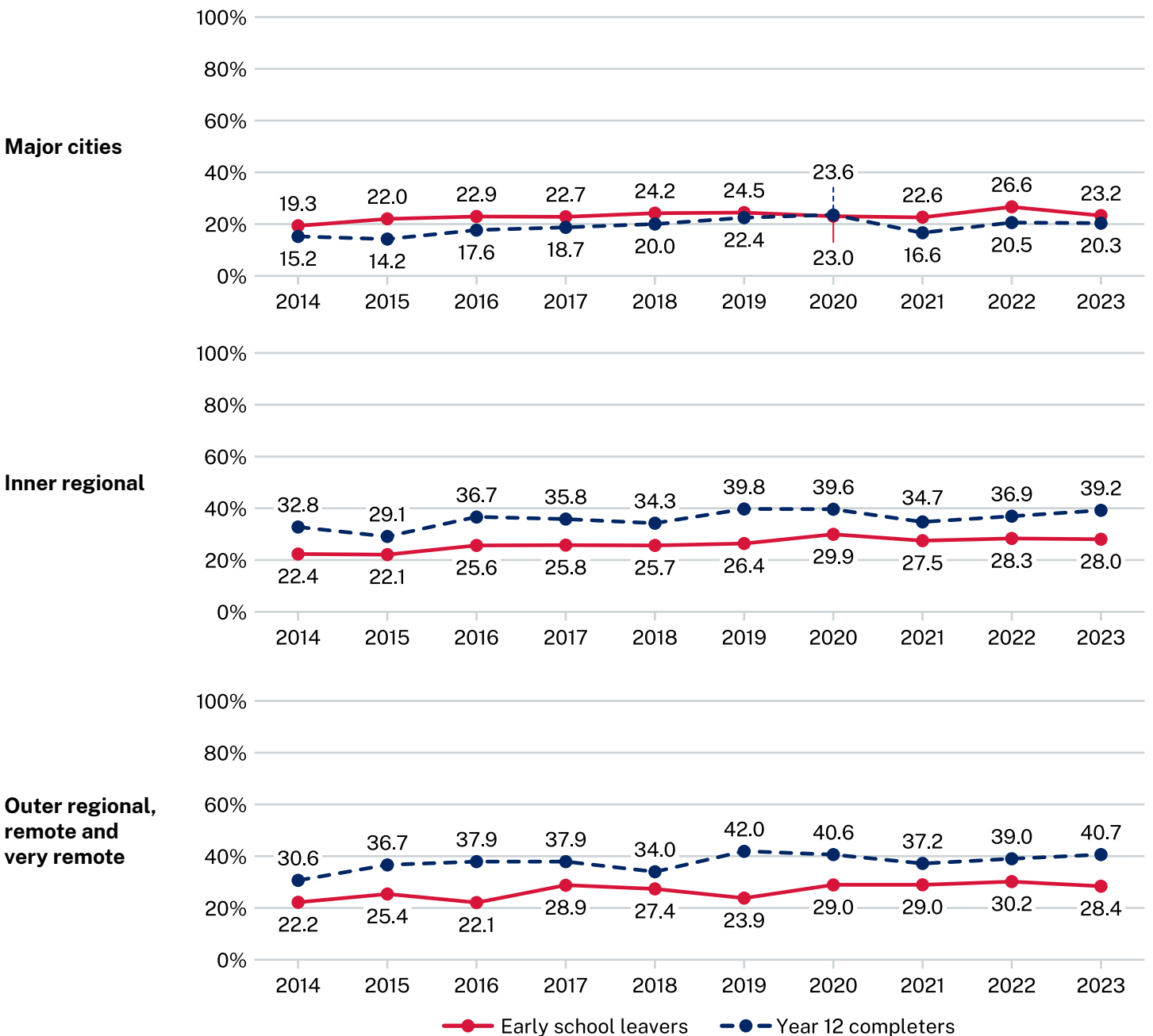
3 Estimated proportions for employment include recent school leavers whose main destination was part-time or full-time work.

Employment trends[4]

Year 12 completers

Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- **Professionals** is trending upward for major city (**0.5 pp** per year) and inner regional school leavers (**0.3 pp**).
- **Sales workers** is trending downward for major city (**-1.2 pp**), inner regional (**-1.4 pp**) and outer regional / remote school leavers (**-1.3 pp**).
- **Machinery operators and drivers** is trending upward for major city (**1.0 pp**), inner regional (**0.9 pp**) and outer regional / remote school leavers (**0.6 pp**).
- **Labourers** is trending downward for major city (**-0.4 pp**) school leavers.
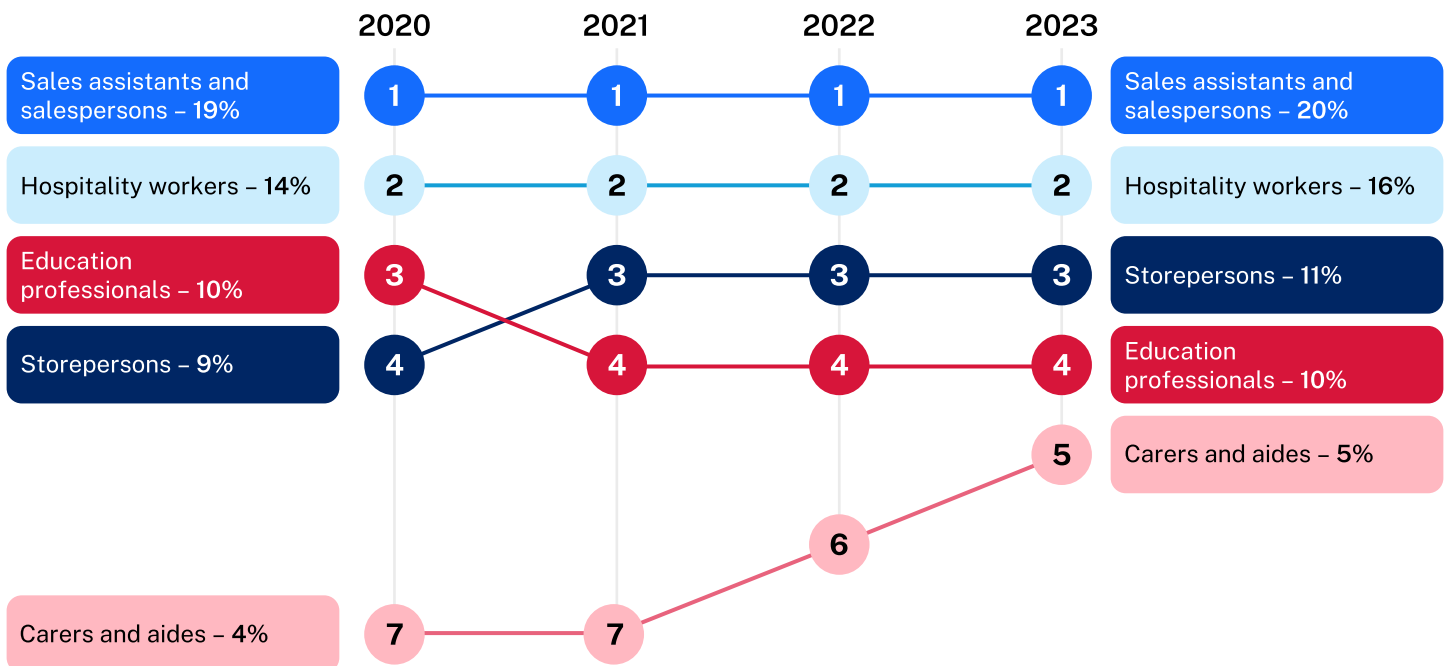
Early school leavers

Trends between 2014 and 2023:

- **Community and personal service workers** is trending upward for major city (**0.4 pp** per year) and inner regional school leavers (**0.5 pp**).
- **Sales workers** is trending downward for major city (**-0.7 pp**), inner regional (**-1.0 pp**) and outer regional / remote school leavers (**-1.2 pp**).
- **Machinery operators and drivers** is trending upward for major city (**0.6 pp**) and inner regional school leavers (**0.3 pp**).
- **Labourers** is trending downward for major city (**-0.5 pp**) school leavers.

Most popular employment areas[5]

The top 2 areas of employment for school leavers from all NSW areas has remained consistent since 2020 and was the same for school leavers in all areas of NSW. Approximately 1 in 5 school leavers in employment-only post-school destinations were employed as sales assistants and salespersons or in hospitality. Approximately 1 in 10 were employed as storepersons, and approximately 1 in 17 were employed as carers or aides. Food preparation assistants was in the top 5 employment areas for inner regional and outer regional, remote or very remote school leavers, while education professionals was in the top 5 for school leavers from major cities.
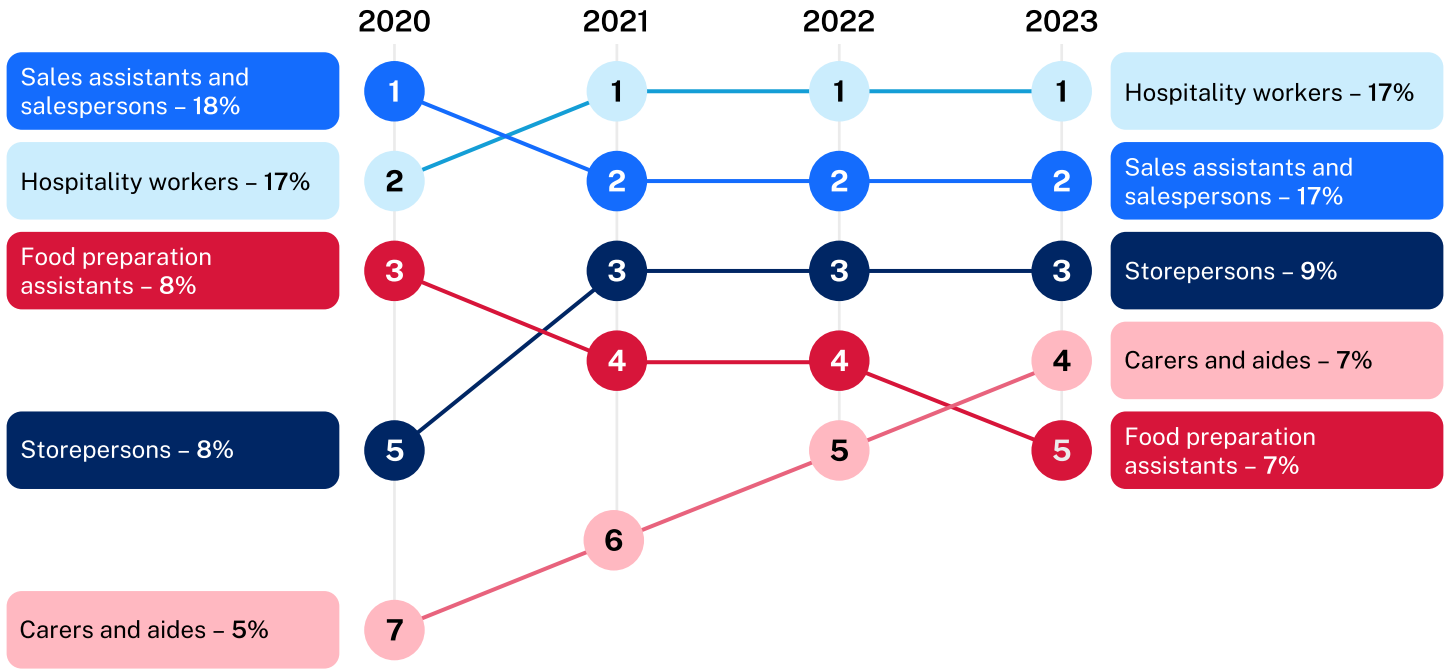
Historical rankings for top 5 employment areas in 2023 – major cities

	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Sales assistants and salespersons – 19%	1	1	1	1	Sales assistants and salespersons – 20%
Hospitality workers – 14%	2	2	2	2	Hospitality workers – 16%
Education professionals – 10%	3	3	3	3	Storepersons – 11%
Storepersons – 9%	4	4	4	4	Education professionals – 10%
				5	Carers and aides – 5%
			6		
Carers and aides – 4%	7	7			

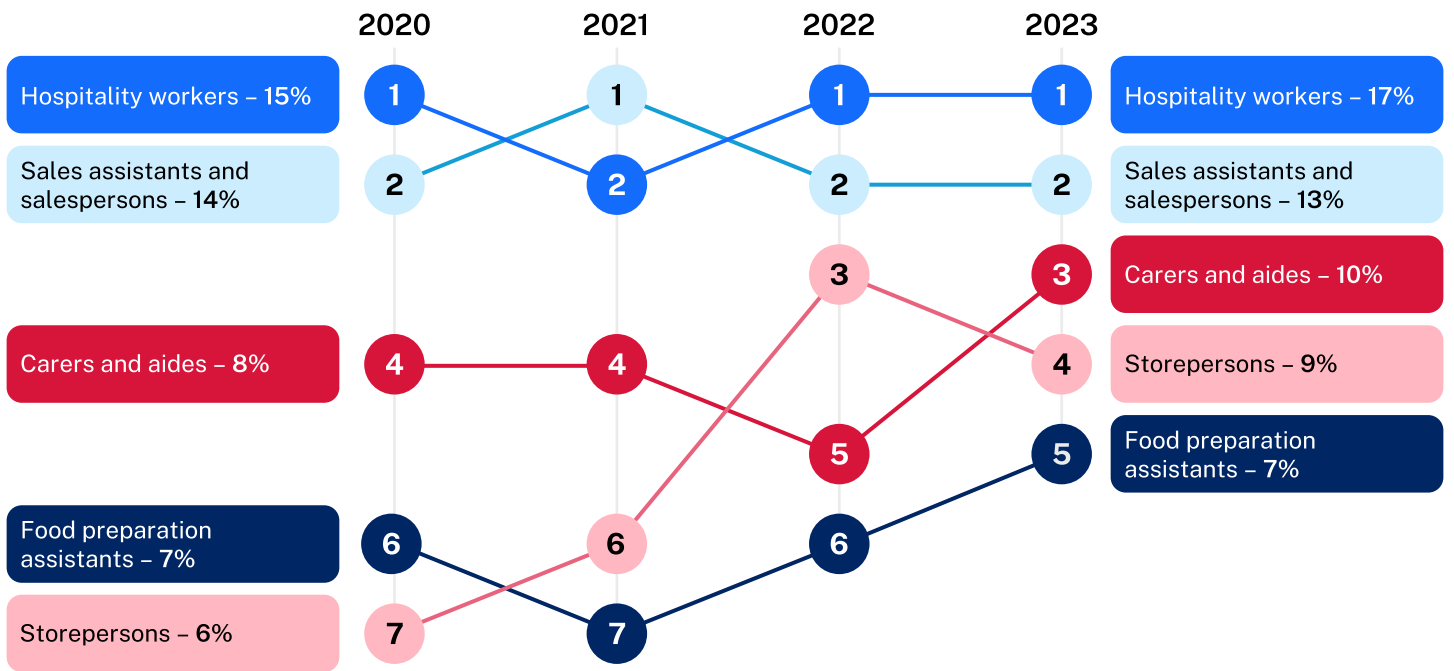4   Employment trends and rankings include those in education and in the workforce but exclude those in an apprenticeship or traineeship.

5   Employment areas are defined by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) major groups and most popular employment areas are defined by the ANZSCO sub-major groups. Refer to the ANZSCO latest release for more information.

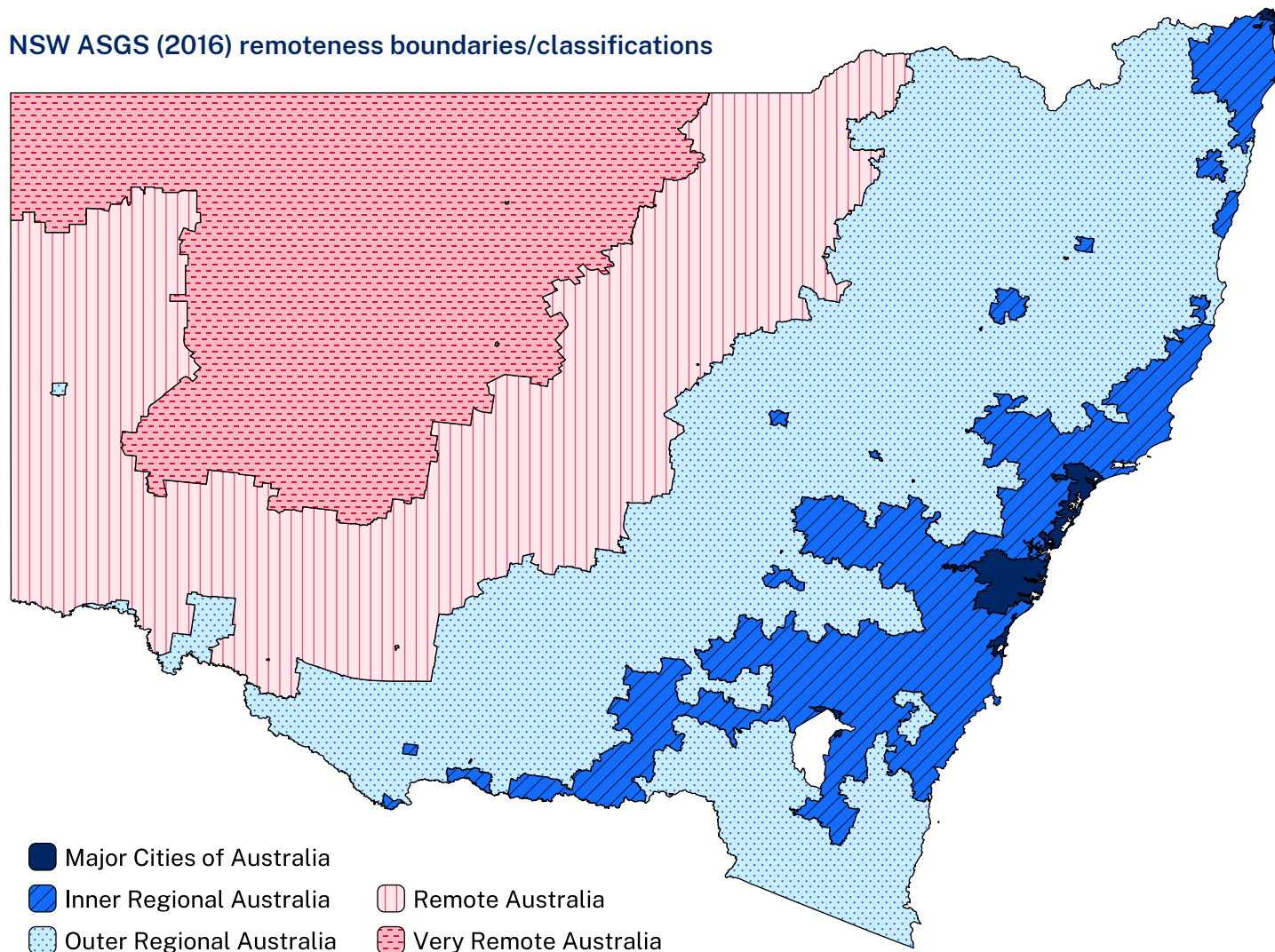## Historical rankings for top 5 employment areas in 2023 – inner regional

	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Sales assistants and salespersons – 18%	1	1	1	1	Hospitality workers – 17%
Hospitality workers – 17%	2	2	2	2	Sales assistants and salespersons – 17%
Food preparation assistants – 8%	3	3	3	3	Storepersons – 9%
		4	4	4	Carers and aides – 7%
Storepersons – 8%	5		5	5	Food preparation assistants – 7%
		6			
Carers and aides – 5%	7				

Historical rankings for top 5 employment areas in 2023 – outer regional, remote and very remote

	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Hospitality workers – 15%	1	1	1	1	Hospitality workers – 17%
Sales assistants and salespersons – 14%	2	2	2	2	Sales assistants and salespersons – 13%
			3	3	Carers and aides – 10%
Carers and aides – 8%	4	4		4	Storepersons – 9%
			5	5	Food preparation assistants – 7%
Food preparation assistants – 7%	6	6	6		
Storepersons – 6%	7	7			

Defining remoteness

NSW ASGS (2016) remoteness boundaries/classifications

Legend:
- ■ Major Cities of Australia
- ▨ Inner Regional Australia
- ▨ Outer Regional Australia
- ▨ Remote Australia
- ▨ Very Remote Australia

The region variable used in this fact sheet was constructed from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2016 remoteness boundaries/classifications. The 5 remoteness classes/categories, determined based on relative access to services, are:

- Major Cities
- Inner Regional
- Outer Regional
- Remote
- Very Remote.

In this fact sheet and 2023 survey reporting, the outer regional, remote and very remote categories have been combined to preserve school leavers' privacy.

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